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ABSTRACT

This manual provides information to caregivers on how to successfully develop a child care center that includes children with disabilities. The benefits of inclusion for children, parents, and providers are identified. Principles for developing an inclusive program are noted, such as developing a partnership with a special education agency. The guide stresses the necessity of developing a philosophical mission statement on inclusion, clarifying lines of authority and roles of administrators, and careful monitoring of money and contracts involved in inclusive programming. Also covered are annual, weekly, and daily schedules; space requirements; accessibility standards; the critical importance of training and staff development; strategies for family involvement; and the elements of successful collaboration. Indicators of a good inclusive program and factors that affect survival of inclusive programs are listed, including a match of values among families, the child care program, and the special education community; a community-wide philosophy of acceptance of diversity; and resolution of differences through a problem-solving strategy. The appendix includes a list of definitions/abbreviations, a guide for child caregivers for determining a child's need for services, a guide to staff teaming, a sample mission statement, and a listing of 14 resources (organizational, print, and videos). (CR)

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Serving Children with Special Needs in Your Child Care Facility

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Developed by the Early Childhood Inclusion Network of Onondaga County
Syracuse, New York

Edited by Julia Searl
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Serving Children with Special Needs in your Early Childhood Setting

What is inclusion?

Inclusion is a process in which children with special needs have the opportunity to participate fully in all activities offered to children who do not have disabilities.

This manual is designed to assist child care providers with information on including children with disabilities in their facilities. It shows you the process that is necessary for a child to receive services, and helps you to identify which children may be eligible. The manual also takes you through the steps of setting up a collaborative inclusive program, and gives key indicators of good inclusive programs, to help evaluate your program. Many resources are listed in the back of this booklet, should you want more information on any topic.

We hope that this manual serves as a useful guide to get you started. We interviewed many day care providers and special educators who provide services in a variety of inclusive settings, and thank them for their valuable insights.

What does inclusion mean for children in my facility?

- **Services and supports are provided in a typical setting**
- **Child care providers and administrators are supported**
- **Friendships among all children are encouraged and fostered**
- **All children are taught to understand and accept differences**

So you want to serve children with special needs... where do you start?

First: Read through this manual. It offers tips, pitfalls to avoid, and resources to call. Contact and/or visit local programs of providers who have successful collaborations.

Second: Call the **Early Childhood Direction Center or The Child Care Resource and Referral Center.** By calling one you can access the expertise of the other. (Call 1-800-962-5488 for a list of ECDCs or 518-463-8663 for the CCR &Rs).Here's what they can do:

- Offer technical assistance and point you to resources
- Link you to other providers
- Help you identify whether a specific child is eligible for services (see the Appendix)
- Show how to link that child and family to the evaluation
- Give hints about approaching parents
- Identify available funding for evaluations and services

Third: Remember, there are **several types of models and options.**

Some providers join as a team and work intimately every day with a group of children with and without disabilities **(special class in an integrated setting model).** Some children receive special services from a therapist in a child care setting **(related service model).** Some children and child care settings are visited a few times a week by a consultant teacher **(itinerant special education teacher model).**

What are the benefits of inclusion?

Inclusion benefits everyone, from children to parents and staff. We have included benefits from many different perspectives, and we are sure that you will be able to add to the lists when you start to build inclusion into your program.

Children with Special Needs

- Part of their community
- Peers serve as role models
- Peers provide a reason to communicate
- Learn motor, communication & other skills within natural settings

Children without Disabilities

- Acceptance of differences
- Diversity of friendships
- Encourages cooperation
- Helps children become more resourceful & creative

Parents

- Awareness of disabilities
- All parents are part of community
- Knowledge of typical development
- Availability of other parents for support & information

Early Childhood Providers

- Hands-on training for staff
- Learn to work as a team
- Wealth of support and materials
- More understanding of child development

Special Education Providers

- Work with diverse staff
- Work with diverse group of children
- Learn skills from other staff
- Move toward whole developmental perspective

Implications for successful collaboration

COLLABORATION TAKES TIME ...

- To build trust
- To understand roles and responsibilities
- To invite and answer questions
- To present information necessary for decision making

COLLABORATION HAS TO BE BASED ON RESPECT THAT IS DEMONSTRATED...

- By holding meetings at mutually convenient times and places
- By insuring that all team members have the same information
- By incorporating differing viewpoints
- By giving validity to differing viewpoints

COLLABORATION MEANS THAT POWER AND CONTROL MUST BE SHARED OR RELINQUISHED

- No one member has all the answers all the time
- Balance and give-and-take are key

What do we need to know to set up an inclusive program?

- Talk with your staff about their views on inclusion, and get their input. Generate specific discussions about how they feel about children with disabilities in their classroom, how children without disabilities benefit, etc.

- Look for a **partner**. This should be a special education agency willing to enter into an equal partnership with both parties respecting each other as a valued contributor to the relationship. Each party should be committed to the increased understanding of the work of the other.

- Look for a partner with a shared **vision, philosophy**, and common ground in **practical application** regarding early childhood education, inclusion, and special education. Spend a lot of time on this! Be as detailed as possible to determine where you agree and where you do not. If you always seem to agree, talk some more.

- Discuss how you would handle conflicts and support needs. See if you can agree on a process.

- Share information on mandates, regulations, and any other constraints (policy, parent organization limits, etc.). Determine if your agencies are at least "workably" compatible.

- Consider joint/collaborative interviews for hiring staff and for evaluations (performance appraisal and staff evaluations). At the minimum, each agency should have "veto power" on hiring/retaining collaborative service staff, and each should have input on job performance evaluations.

The next few pages describe things to think about...

5

Philosophy

This is one of the most important aspects of providing an inclusive setting in your early childhood program. Whether the services take place in your child care center or at the child's home, you will need to think hard about what you want. You need to:

- Make a clear statement of your beliefs about how children learn, and how they should be served. Be specific! Generalities can lead to a false sense of compatibility.

- Get familiar with each other's agency mission statement. Policy manuals and job descriptions can give a clearer sense of practical applications of mission.

- Whose children are these children? What degree of responsibility for all children in the classroom or program is each partner willing to assume? How is this actualized?

See Appendix for an example of a philosophical mission statement

"I've gained an understanding of how to help different people with whatever needs they have. I used to feel sorry for handicapped people. I had an image of physical disabilities. I have learned about the **abilities** *of kids."*

Quote from a child care provider

Lines of authority

Since there will be many people involved, this needs to be carefully explored **from the beginning**.

Administrators: Includes executive directors, directors

- Need to create specific channels of communication & decision-making
- Day care administrators need to understand and be aware of what services are provided and how they address children's needs
- Both agencies need to understand each other's mandates and regulations

The Team: Includes special education teachers and teacher assistants, child care lead teachers and teacher assistants, occupational therapists, physical therapists, speech and language therapists, social workers, etc.

- All staff are part of the team
- Clarify early childhood and special ed staff roles: how they interrelate and how support structures will work together
- Consider the relationships among staff between agencies
- Consider the relationships among staff within agencies at each level
- Ask the following questions:
  1. Who makes what decisions?
  2. How will successes be celebrated?
  3. How will support be made available?
  4. Who is responsible for what paperwork, contacts, coordination, etc.? This includes IEPs, IFSPs, day care checklists, etc.
  5. How will problems/breeches of regulations or policies be handled?
  6. How will corrective action or training needs be handled?
  7. Who is the support person/coordinator? From which agency? If there is one from each agency, how will they relate to each other?
  8. How can you enable people to **release** their roles?

> *"[It's great] having an administrative support person to help mediate and help work things out on the team."*

Quote from an early childhood provider

Money and contracts

You need to make a clear and detailed plan about who pays for what, and ensure that payments are made promptly. You should also consider:

- What costs are there? Who pays for each itemized cost?
- If an academic calendar is followed, where does money come from for breaks and holidays?
- If services are not on an academic schedule (itinerant services or early intervention) then how is payment for child care or nursery school secured?
- Who purchases and decides on supplies and equipment?
- How will you coordinate paperwork?
- Who develops contracts and signs them?
- How can day care staff be freed for planning time, trainings, etc.?
- Who provides maintenance of the facility?
- Are your respective mandates congruent? For example, Department of Social Services, Department of Health, State Education Department
- Who pays for insurance coverage and other liability issues?

Schedules

Schedules need to be set so that all staff have knowledge of daily, weekly and annual calendars. All staff should work together to plan schedules. All staff need to be flexible!!

Annual

Share the calendar in the beginning of the school year

Plan for holiday and vacation coverage as needed

Plan for snow emergencies

If children are bussed from different parts of the county, plan for differing arrival and departure times

Weekly

Everyone should know when each staff person works

Planning meetings should be part of the schedule

Create a schedule that makes sense to the child and the classroom

Daily

Clarify who is responsible for which part of the daily plan

Clarify who schedules staff breaks and when they are to occur

Everyone should know the daily schedule for each child

"Scheduling is one of the biggest [challenges]. Team planning is very difficult to schedule."

Quote from a child care provider

Space and accessibility

When we think about space, generally we think of the classroom. However, this can also be extended to adult space too. Some of the things to keep in mind include:

- Will some therapists need space outside of the classroom for "pull-out" services?
- Is there therapeutic equipment that will take up a lot of room?
- Is there "quiet space" for children?
- Are there too many people for the size of the classroom?
- Are there times when different staff can set up for activities?
- Are staff responsible for taking care of the space they use?
- Is there space for assessments and evaluations?
- Is there a place for staff belongings?
- Is there adequate space for files and notes?
- Is there a place staff can write up observations and notes?
- Is there a place where staff can keep materials for therapies?

The **Americans with Disabilities Act** is a federal law that requires facilities to be accessible for people with disabilities. As you plan your rooms, imagine what it would be like for a child in a wheelchair to get around. Remember that this includes classrooms as well as bathrooms.

> *"Kids need space and lots of adults [in the classroom] mean taking up space. Not enough space brings out anxiety in kids and adults."*

Quote from a day care provider

Meeting together

Regular planning time needs to be scheduled so that day care staff and special education staff can attend. Many teams do this during a nap time or provide a sub from either staff so that the early childhood teacher(s) can be available. When teams meet there is communication, a consistent approach for children and families, and an efficient way to share the work of the classroom. This meeting time can have several purposes:

Plan together for:

- The weekly themes, schedule and routines
- Who designs and sets up which activities
- Classroom coverage at different times
- Clarifying each person's role
- Acknowledgment of what is going well

Problem-solve together about:

- Goals for children with special needs and how to implement them
- The development and updating of these goals (the IFSP & IEP)
- Classroom issues related to children and families
- Results of record keeping
- How the team is working together (see Appendix)
- Transitioning children to other settings

Staff Development by:

- Creating opportunities to share information and approaches with each other
- Bringing in speakers or films around topics of interest

Teams can get better at using limited meeting time by having agendas, keeping time, etc. See the Appendix for ideas about ways to make the best use of your time together.

Staff development

As with any new venture, all staff will need to learn from each other, as well as learning about how to work with each other. **Together** the staff should consider:

What kinds of training or in-service opportunities can be made available to us?

Can we get substitute teachers to free up our time?

Can we manage to arrange for larger blocks of time to learn from each other and outside experts?

What do we need to know about each other in order to work well together?

How do we view children and their strengths and needs?

What kinds of rules and regulations do we each have to work with?

What do we need to know about modifying our separate programs to provide a truly inclusive program?

What do we need to know about building teams, having productive planning meetings, choosing activities, and resolving conflicts that arise?

What do we need to know about working with families?

Here are some important tips to remember:

- All staff should help identify topics and needs for training
- All staff should participate together in the training activities
- All staff have knowledge and resources to share with each other
- Acknowledge differences in your programs and educate each other in your different methods and approaches in an on-going manner

> *"To have successful collaboration, it is crucial to have in-service around communication skills."*

Quote from an early childhood center director

What do families want from us?

To be sensitive to the needs of the families we serve, we should take into account the degree to which our programs and agencies are truly focused on both the **strengths** and the **needs** our families offer. Moving toward more **family-centered** practices involves a consideration of the following:

- Families want to be respected
- Families want to be treated as individuals
- Families want to hear from other parents who have "been there"
- Families want to feel welcome in your center
- Families want accurate and consistent information in writing; information that is simplified and packaged in a useable way.
- Families want connections with sensitive and knowledgeable professionals
- Families want the system to be responsive to their needs
- Families want to develop a degree of trust through open and honest communication
- Families want access to programs and services embedded within their local community.
- Families want consistency in transitions when a child goes from infant to preschool program, and from preschool into the public school system

Strategies to keep families involved:

- Establish on-going communication by:
  - * Regularly scheduled home visits
  - * Daily or weekly notebooks that go home with children
  - * Phone calls that are convenient to families
  - * Make the classroom accessible for parents to observe
- Help parents access resources and support, including the following areas:
  - * Rights and responsibilities within IFSP, IEP and CPSE systems
  - * Medical professionals
  - * Child welfare programs
- Involve families at your center
  - * Develop parent support groups (daytime and evening)
  - * Informational meetings on specific topics (daytime and evening)

Remember...

What families want for their children **with** identified special needs are the same things that families want for their children **without** special needs. This includes:

- Positive and consistent human relationships
- Understanding and well trained early childhood providers and staff
- Closer child/adult ratios in all classrooms
- Less adult-directed "education" and more developmentally appropriate practice
- A view of the child based more upon individual strengths than perceived deficits
- Acceptance and appreciation for the unique ways in which we all learn and grow

"First help me identify the need, and then help me meet it."

Quote from a parent

What's it like to have a child with special needs?

Every family is unique and deals differently with a child with special needs. However, many families express these types of feelings when they discover that they have a child with special needs.

Isolation:	We are in this alone, and no one else has ever had this experience. Our friends and family don't understand and aren't helpful. It's us against the world.
Guilt:	Whose fault is this? Why did this happen to us?
Fear:	What is going to happen next? How will these bills get paid? What will this disability mean to me and my child? Will he be able to do things like other children? Will any of my dreams for her be realized?
Anger:	This is the fault of _____!!!! (God, the doctor, etc.)
Depression: (chronic sorrow)	This isn't going to be easy. Look what the other kids are doing that my child can't do.
"Acceptance" (coping)	We are dealing with this. She is accomplishing things. There are others in our shoes or even worse off. Our child is unique just like every other child and is a gift to us like any other child.

These feelings come and go like a circle. They are all perfectly "normal" and helpers shouldn't label them otherwise!

What are the elements of successful collaboration?

We listened to many people talk about working together, and found that the single most important element toward success is **respect** or **feeling valued**. In addition, the following ideas were also cited as important:

- Flexibility in terms of different styles and different ways to meet goals
- Communication and cooperation
- Ability to disagree and still work together
- Shared philosophy and common goals
- Getting to know each other; empathy and understanding
- Time and opportunity to plan and build classroom structure
- Joint decision-making
- Definition of roles in advance
- Supportive administrators
- Ability to handle conflicts in a constructive way
- Common sense and common courtesy
- Ability for staff from both agencies to work with all kids in the classroom
- Humor
- Put children first

> *"People [special education staff] working in a community-based setting need to know what they are doing and how to do it well enough to adapt to different contexts."*

Quote from a special education teacher

> *"Caring [is important] so when something comes up it's handled in a loving way, instead of confrontational."*

Quote from an early childhood teacher

Challenges to successful collaboration

Early Childhood Perspective

* Importance of making team work together smoothly
* Finding time to communicate with entire team
* Need for child care staff to give input on CPSE
* Special education staff in classroom for short period of time
* Need to know in advance when therapy schedule changes
* Sometimes too many adults in the classroom
* Transient nature of kids, due to DSS funding

Special Education Perspective

* Need to take different personalities & styles into account
* High staff turnover means starting over again
* Need to understand different rules & regulations
* Limitations because of high number of kids to staff
* Hard to deal with behavioral challenges of child care children
* Lack of good role models in many child care centers

Parent Perspective

* Will my child be safe?
* Will my child be teased?
* Will my child get the services she needs?
* What if I don't like the way services are provided?

"Beginnings are always difficult. The starting point is the child, and things can work out from there."

Quote from a speech therapist

Indicators of a good inclusive program

There are many factors to look at when evaluating an inclusive program. We have divided the indicators into seven different sections. You can use these indicators to look at other programs and to evaluate your own.

Philosophy
The program must have a mission statement which supports the right to inclusion of all preschool children

Staff
There should be regular staff development for administrators and support personnel of both programs

Administrative factors
There should be administrative commitment to provide inclusive services

Instruction and related services
Learning is based on functional needs and should be developmentally appropriate

Parent participation
The program must be responsive to parent concerns

Service delivery format
Education should be provided in the most natural setting possible

Transition
There should be longitudinal planning throughout the program

Factors that affect survival of inclusive programs

- **A match of values and goals between families, the child care community and the special education community**
- **The belief that children's participation and inclusion in natural settings is a valued goal in itself and remediation of children's deficits is not the only important goal of special education**
- **A community-wide philosophy of acceptance of diversity and learning variance**
- **A high degree of collaboration and participation in designing the program and in making operating decisions for the program**
- **Mutual ownership of the program and of all the children attending**
- **Compatibility between the design of the special education instruction and the routines and practices of the child care setting**
- **Positive adult relationships, with rewarding experiences in teaming and collaborating**
- **Differences of opinions resolved through a problem-solving strategy**

"You need a major sense of humor and a realistic idealism; having one's head in the clouds and one's feet on the ground at the same time."

Quote from a day care administrator

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What do all these terms mean?

Early Intervention Program: Guided by federal and state law, this program serves children with disabilities under the age of three years. In New York State, the Department of Health administers the program and each County Health Department is responsible for local administration. This program has many components and funds some services for the infant or toddler with disabilities as well as his or her family. Law requires that children be served in his or her "**natural environment**." This may include the child's home, day care, babysitter, etc. The contact person in your county is called the **Early Intervention Official**.

Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP): All families of children with disabilities (birth to three) enrolled in the Early Intervention Program have an IFSP. It tells who is responsible for what, and how often services will be provided. It is a "user friendly" plan that lays out goals for a child and his or her family. Child care providers may be asked to contribute to the plan.

Early Intervention Service Coordinator: Children and their families enrolled in the Early Intervention Program (birth to three) have a coordinator of services. This person helps the family access evaluation and services and makes sure things are working according to the IFSP. After checking with the parent , this person is who you can call if you need help or have concerns about an enrolled child.

Committee on Preschool Special Education (CPSE): This committee makes decisions about services for children with disabilities between the ages of three years and five years of age. The Committee is chaired by a special education administrator from the school district where the child lives. The input from child care providers should be sought, especially if the child is in that setting while identified as a preschool child with a disability.

Individualized Education Plan (IEP): This is the plan that sets out the goals and objectives for a preschooler (three to five years old) with a disability. It lasts for a year and specifies what services will be provided to the child, where they will occur, how often and who will provide them.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA): This is recent legislation that bans discrimination against children and adults with disabilities and requires that reasonable accommodation be made for a person with a disability. This is relevant to your facility because rooms need to be made accessible, including the bathroom. Also, try to lay out your classroom's floor plan in a way that helps all children maneuver easily.

These abbreviations are good to know:

DSS: Department of Social Services. Provides funding for some children to attend early childhood settings

PT: Physical therapy

ST: Speech therapy

OT: Occupational therapy

SED: State Education Department

DOH: Department of Health

What do we do when we think a child needs services?

If you are unsure if there is a problem on not your first step is to talk to the parents. Do they share your concern? Are they seeing similar problems at home? If you were the parent, how would you feel about hearing what is being said? Use child-centered language to describe your concerns and be specific. For example, "Johnny seems to be frustrated when his friends don't understand him." Together you can make a comfortable choice from among these options:

- **Call the Early Childhood Direction Center** to talk over your concerns and obtain a good description of all the options available. They will consult with you even if you have not spoken with the family (keeping the names in confidence). No fee.

- **Call the Child Care Resource and Referral** They also offer free telephone consultations. Some CCR&Rs offer observation and child related consultation, with parent permission.

- **Call Early Intervention for a screening**(only if the child is under the age of three) for a developmental screening which can take place at your center, in a family day care or in the child's home.

Who do I call if a child has a delay?

All of the options described above are still available to you. Some of the terms are described in the Appendix. If you and the family feel that you want to skip any type of screening and have the child developmentally assessed there are several choices:

- **If the child is under three, call Early Intervention.** The child will be seen by at least two professionals, one who can deal with the primary area of concern. The evaluation can take place at home or at the evaluation site. There are lots of choices in the County and a **Service Coordinator** from Early Intervention will discuss these with the family. No fee.

- **If the child is over three, contact the Chairperson for Preschool Special Education** from the school district where the child lives. The child will receive an evaluation from two or more professionals, one of whom will be a school psychologist. No fee.

- There are also **private agencies, clinics and clinicians** who will see young children and bill private insurance or Medicaid.

Confused??? Not sure which is appropriate for <u>your</u> situation? Call the Early Childhood Direction Center at _____ and get help sorting this out! For the ECDC nearest you, call 1-800-962-5488

How do children become eligible for services?

Children must receive an evaluation to be eligible for services. An evaluation is a careful examination of a child's skills, strengths and weak areas to determine current levels of functioning. Out of this comes a plan on what areas the child needs help with. Evaluations, from the child's point of view, are usually fun, not scary, with testers using toys and games to get at the information they need. An evaluation procedure consists of gathering information through observation, family interviewing, and testing.

Here's how an evaluation works

Observations:
Sometimes the evaluator will come to the day care center or preschool to see how the child relates and performs. Other evaluators will call the child care professional to gather information about specific concerns, behaviors, previous screenings and general thoughts about how the child performs at the center. Child care professionals are asked to fill out a "**preschool checklist**" for children referred for a Preschool Special Education Evaluation.

Family interviewing:
Much of the same information is gathered from the child's family. What questions do they want addressed? How does the child act at home? How has the child developed over the years? Parent input, their view of the strengths, needs and personality of their child is crucial.

Testing:
The formal testing includes all areas of development.
Motor: moving, using her body, using "fine muscles" for tasks like grasping
Cognition: thinking, figuring things out, problem solving
Speech/language: talking, understanding, communicating
Adaptive: self help in areas like dressing and eating
Social/emotional: getting along with others, coping, playing with toys & other children
Physical: general health

What happens after the evaluation?

All observations, interviews and testing are written up into a report. This should give a clear idea about how a child functions in the key areas of development. What can she do? What does he like to do? What kinds of things should she be encouraged to do next?

The answers to these questions are the foundation of an intervention plan:
The IFSP (birth to three) or IEP (three to five).
The plan consists of goals based on developmental levels and a child's particular needs and strengths. These goals are reached by carefully mapping out activities using toys, exercises, games and other play to help the child move toward new goals...one step at a time.

Many of the activities can be part of the young child's normal day, such as during bath time or meal time. Most can be incorporated into the child care setting's range of activities. Early childhood teachers, parents and various specialists (such as speech pathologists, psychologists, physical therapists and special education teachers) team together to plan and carry out a constructive program.

Remember:
Any plan must be looked over regularly and re-evaluated to make sure that it still fits the child and her changing self. Parents are a very important part of this evaluation process!

Criteria for receiving services

Up to Age Three

A child under the age of three is eligible for services if he or she has not attained developmental milestones expected for the child's chronological age in one or more of these areas of development: cognitive, physical (including vision and hearing), communication, social/emotional, and adaptive development. A developmental delay is currently defined as one of the following:

- A twelve month delay in one of the areas listed above
- A 33% delay in one area or a 25% delay in two areas
- Using standardized tests, a score of at least 2.0 standard deviations below the mean in one area or a score of at least 1.5 standard deviations below the mean in two areas
- If standardized tests are inappropriate or cannot be used, professional opinion determines eligibility

Changes in the child's development, anticipated health or medical factors and prognosis for change are also relevant to whether the child receives services. Remember that the needs of the family also impact the decision.

Age Three to Five

Evaluators look at the same areas of development, and must show that they affect the preschooler's ability to learn. Specifically, a delay is defined by one of the following:

- A 12 month delay in one or more areas
- A 33% delay in one area or a 25% delay in two areas
- Using standardized tests, a score of 2.0 standard deviations below the mean in one area or a score of 1.5 standard deviations below the mean in two areas
- Have a specific diagnosis of autism, deafness, deaf-blind, hard of hearing, orthopedically impaired, other health-impaired, traumatic brain-injured, or visually impaired

Teaming

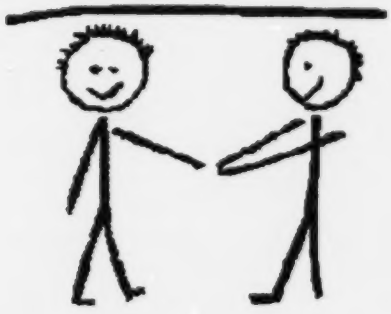
Focusing on teaming with your staff will increase the probability that you can work together and solve any problems that come up between staff members. The next few pages include materials that you might use for an in-service on teaming. Feel free to reproduce these and share with others.

- **Stages of team development**
  All teams or groups go through stages as the members learn to know each other and work together. It is helpful for staff to know that these phases are typical.

- **Team meetings: How to learn to love them**
  Making effective use of meetings is critical to working well together.

- **Effective communication strategies**
  All groups work better when the members employ effective communication skills and use good problem-solving strategies.

- **How are we doing? A review process for evaluating teams that work in inclusive settings**
  Created by the Inclusive Education Project at Syracuse University, these self-study guides help team members analyze their process and identify areas to work on.



Stages of team development

FORMING

- deals with inclusion
- individuals look for people with similar backgrounds and experience
- differences are noted
- team in a dependent relationship with authority figures or trainers

STORMING

- deals with power and control
- individuals challenge to regain individuality, power and influence
- attempts made to create order
- team in a counter-dependent relationship with authority figures or trainers
- individuals exhibit covert nonsupport or direct attacks
- emotional response to task demands

NORMING

- deals with cohesion, negotiation
- team negotiates roles and processes for accomplishing its task
- an unspoken "teamness" emerges
- team in interdependent relationship with others
- the team tackles its task

PERFORMING

- deals with growth, insight and collaboration
- tasks are completed and shared
- team is pleased with its work and the team

TRANSFORMING

- group members feel great cohesiveness
- when group disbands, they are sad
- group is helped by thinking about the transference of their skills to a new group and/or a new role

Taken from Weber, NTL Training Manual

The group is forming

Here are some activities to use to help group members share themselves and begin to communicate about values and group goals. You can vary the format or the content, but the goal is to begin to build a working relationship in a way that is fun, interesting and safe for each team member.

I. The Interview: Divide your team into pairs. Partners interview each other on the following topics:

a. Tell me three things that are wonderful about you.

b. What is something "new and good" that has occurred in your life in the last few weeks?

c. What brought you to this work with children?

After you have completed the interviews (about 20 minutes) report back to the team and introduce your partner by describing what you learned in your interview.

II. Show and Tell: From your classroom, select an object (toy/play/material, etc.) that reflects your style with children or your favorite way to spend time with children. Bring this to the team and talk about why you chose it.

III. Imagine: Close your eyes and imagine yourself as a preschooler, standing at the door of your classroom on the first day of school. You might even go and kneel at the door of the room. An adult is coming toward you. What are you feeling? What do you want the grownup to say and do? What will make you feel safe and comfortable? What will help you feel you belong and that you know what to do? Share your thoughts with your team members and talk about what this tells you about how you should begin the year with your students.

IV. Memories: Think about one of the following and share with your team members:

a. What are your earliest memories of school? Usually our long-term memories are those with high emotional content. Are your memories joyous or painful; situations that made you feel good or bad about yourself?

b. Think about a teacher who has been important to you. How did that teacher relate to you, or how did s/he teach? What is it about that teacher that you value or would want to emulate? What do you think makes a good teacher?

V. Symbolize: Distribute to each team a basket of construction materials (e.g. tinker toys, bristle blocks, inch cubes, Construx, etc.) or a pile of newspapers and magazines, poster board, scissors and glue. Using the materials provided, create as a group a portable symbol of what you hope your classroom will be for children and adults. Be sure that each team member is represented in the product. Show and describe your product to others. (These creations can be put on display in some school common area later.) Return to your team and talk about **how** you worked together on this task. For example,

Whose ideas were carried out?
What ideas were not incorporated and why?
Who talked the most?
Who talked the least?
How were decisions made?
Did anyone feel left out?
How did you feel if others did not listen to you or if your idea was not accepted?

VI. Projection: Your class has been nominated as "Class of the Year" by a local early childhood organization. You will be the subject of a *Press Conference* in June and you have been asked to write a statement for reporters and TV cameras regarding your great classroom. Write this statement by describing successful moments during the year, the positive contributions you have made to the lives of children and families, and any continuing challenges. Delegate someone in your group to read this statement to the reporters and the whole group.

It is always good to begin a team experience with a warm-up activity. These warm-ups can reduce tension, and let everyone laugh; they are good levelers. They might include: keeping a number of balloons in the air; playing musical laps; creating a January to December birthday line-up nonverbally; while all holding hands in a circle, pass a hoola-hoop around the group.

The group is storming

As the year moves on, staff focus on issues of trust, authority and control, and clarity of roles. Here are some activities to facilitate communication about how the group is doing and how individual team members are feeling.

I. <u>Investment:</u> Each team member should complete the following chart and then share it with the team.

TAKE A FEW MINUTES AND COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING FORM; TALK WITH YOUR TEAM ABOUT YOUR THOUGHTS

What I feel about: myself at work

What I feel good about: our team

What I'm stressed about: my own work

What I'm dissatisfied with: in our team

II. <u>Trust:</u> Trust with other team members develops over time. In an effective team, members must trust each other in order to feel valued and respected, safe enough to disclose personal feelings, and to ask for help. Describe a time when you were part of a group[where you felt a high degree of trust. What happened there? What occurs that helps you trust others? What is happening on your team now that helps you trust or not? Share these thoughts with others.

III. Role Clarity: Complete the following form, indicating which roles are individual responsibility and which are shared responsibility. Share it with team members.

Aspects of my role I am clear about:
Classroom tasks where responsibility is unclear/confused:
Areas of classroom responsibility that are sources of tension/dispute:

Where responsibilities are unclear, make a list of the tasks and decide who will do them and when. Where roles or tasks are in dispute, specify a process for talking and clarifying them (including ownership issues, differences in style, dislike of the work, etc.).

IV. Group Participation: Complete the following statements regarding group participation and personal style. Share your responses with team members.

I would characterize my participation a team meetings as _____.

I would describe my contribution to group problem-solving in this team as _____.

My active participation in meetings will increase if:

1. *I did the following:*
2. *Other people did the following:*

Team meetings: How to learn to love them

YOU KNOW IT'S TIME TO RETHINK YOUR MEETINGS WHEN...

*Attendance falls off
*People come in late for meetings
*Meetings seem too long and unproductive
*There is a lot of griping/moping/negative talk
*A number of team members are silent and not participating
*People come to meetings unprepared
*Diverse ideas are not "bubbling up"
*Decisions are not being made or decisions made are not followed up
*Tension is evident among group members

GROUPS WORK BEST WHEN...

*There are agreed-up norms of operation (e.g. everyone should participate, the meeting should start and end on time, etc.
*There is an agreed-upon agenda
*A process allows the group to address personal/relationship needs
*The group has a sense of involvement and empowerment and knows that decisions are really its own
*Various members provide group facilitation, helping the group move forward through the agenda within the time available, make necessary decisions and plans for implementation
*The group takes the time to evaluate their process and their meetings in particular

REMEMBER, it helps to...

Set an agenda prior to the meeting
Arrange seating in a circle
Have good food available
Have someone take notes
Set priorities for discussion
Evaluate the meeting
End on a positive note

Group process/Communication skills

Every group needs to focus on **accomplishing tasks** and **maintaining positive working relationships.**

Behaviors related to the task/agenda items:

- Offering information
- Offering opinions
- Seeking information
- Seeking information of others
- Asking questions
- Diagnosing group difficulties
- Coordinating work

Behaviors that help maintain positive working relationships:

- Encouraging participation
- Offering comic relief
- Being an active listener
- Offering support to other people's ideas
- Managing conflict:
  - Criticizing/questioning ideas, not people
  - Integrating several opinions into a single position
  - Building on ideas
  - Seeing the idea from the other person's perspective
- Avoiding communication roadblocks, such as:
  - Use of killer phrases: "That's impossible!"
    "You don't know what it's like here."
    "It won't work."
  - Diverting from task/agenda items:
    "Let me tell you what happened to me today."
    "Speaking of _____, did you know that..."

Effective communication strategies

- Deal with issues as they arise, but not necessarily in the heat of the conflict.
- Listen carefully and ask for clarification. Many problems are the result of incorrect assumptions and misunderstandings.
- Speak for yourself and talk directly to the person involved in any issue. Speaking to and for others can create new issues and escalate a conflict.
- Value others for who they are, not who you would like them to be. Be empathic with their perspective.
- Never underestimate the importance of **positive** feedback!
- Aim to be assertive: Express your own feelings and needs while respecting those of others.

Problems and solutions

It is important to keep in mind that problems are not necessarily negative. Through communication and understanding, teams can work together to solve and resolve problems or issues that come up.

A PROBLEM IS:

*Something that needs to be "fixed"

*An area that is less than ideal, especially:

Curriculum and instruction

School climate

The school as a work place

A PROBLEM CAN:

*Demand major overhaul or only require fine tuning

*Be work related or organization related

SYMPTOMS OF PROBLEMS:

*Tension

*Frustration

A SOLUTION IS:

*Something that "fixes" a need

*Something that improves instruction, the climate or the work place

A SOLUTION CAN BE:

*A major change (long range)

*A minor adjustment (short range)

THE SOLUTION SPACE IS:

*Something team members can do as part of their work (in the job description)

*Defined and articulated by the supervisor, director, etc.

"How Are We Doing?":

A Review Process for Evaluating Teams Which are Working in Inclusive Settings

Linda Davern, Alison Ford, Joe Marusa and Roberta Schnorr

Special Projects/Consortium; Syracuse University, 1992.

Review Form

"How Are We Doing?": A Review Process for Evaluating Teams Which are Working in Inclusive Settings

Team members present:_____

_____

Date_____ Facilitator_____

	(Check One)		
	This is an Area of Strength for Us	This is an Area for Further Development	Ideas for Making Progress on Priority Items
A. Holding a Shared Philosophy. Do we have a shared philosophy related to:			
●Full inclusion of <u>all</u> students?			
●Partnership with parents/caregivers?			
●The importance of student input and choice-making?			
●Addressing problematic behaviors in positive ways?			
●The use of age-appropriate materials and adaptations?			
●Other?_____			

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--Davern, L., Ford, A., Marusa, J. & Schnorr, R. (1992). *"How are we doing?": A review process for evaluating teams which are working in inclusive settings.* Inclusive Education Project; Syracuse University.

B. Establishing Effective Communication Patterns

- Are we meeting regularly to discuss lessons and other issues related to planning and student progress?

- Are we bringing all team members into decision-making (as possible and appropriate)?

- Do we use effective group process procedures to ensure that meetings are productive?
  - ✓Are meetings facilitated effectively?
  - ✓Do we use an agenda with time limits?
  - ✓ Do we establish additional roles such as a notetaker and timekeeper ?
  - ✓Do we have a summary and evaluation component to our meetings?
  - ✓Do each of us participate actively in meetings?

- Is there a system for staff to note concerns *between* meetings (e.g., a notebook or clipboard to log concerns to raise at the next meeting)?

This is an Area of Strength for Us	This is an Area for Further Development	Ideas for Making Progress on Priority Items

	This is an Area of Strength for Us	This is an Area for Further Development	Ideas for Making Progress on Priority Items
● Do we convey information and requests throughout the day in ways which are respectful to all members?			
● Do we give and accept constructive feedback and suggestions?			
● Do we listen effectively to each other's concerns?			
● Are we addressing problems or conflicts as they arise (while remaining sensitive to each other's feelings)?			
● Do we give our "team" credit for our successes?			
C. Maintaining Positive Attitudes Towards Teamwork and Team Members.			
Are team members able to:			
● Maintain a positive and supportive attitude towards teamwork and team members?			
● Show flexibility with each other as needed?			

	This is an Area of Strength for Us	This is an Area for Further Development	Ideas for Making Progress on Priority Items
● Share materials and resources?			
D. Clarifying Roles and Responsibilities			
● Is there clear consensus on roles and responsibilities?			
● Is our weekly schedule clearly outlined?			
● Do we ensure that teaching responsibilities for particular students do not fall solely to one member? Are "all team members equally important to all students?"			
● Do we share duties equitably when feasible (including those perceived as less desirable)?			
● Do we feel adequately supported in fulfilling our roles?			
E. Maximizing our Effectiveness			
● Do we go to each other for ideas and to discuss problems?			

This is an Area of Strength for Us	This is an Area for Further Development	Ideas for Making Progress on Priority Items

- Do we use other resource people in the building/district as needed?

F. Using a Collaborative Problem-solving Process

- Do we use a collaborative problem-solving process?[1] That is, when a significant challenge arises, do we:

1)clarify the problem;
2)brainstorm possible solutions;
3)select which solutions seem most appropriate;
4)plan who will do what, as well as where and when they will do it;
5)implement the plan; and
6)evaluate it and modify it as needed?

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G. Other concerns regarding our teamwork?

H. Other ideas for improving our teamwork?

Facilitator for next review_____**Date of next review**_____

[1]This process is derived from Bolton, R. (1979). *People skills*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Sample mission statement

We believe all children regardless of level of ability are entitled to a high quality program that provides the following characteristics:
A child centered program that allows children to make their own choices. Developmentally appropriate activities and environment.
Routine and activities that enhance independence and autonomy in all children.
Encourage parent/guardian partnerships with staff to provide for and support family needs. Provide environments and activities that support the needs of individual children.
Acceptance and support of cultural families and individual differences.
Promotion of the child's self-confidence and self-esteem.
Assist in developing increased flexibility in children to help develop their individual ability to cope with change. To foster the child's sense of self-control over one's destiny.
Strengthen and support cooperation and friendship between all children.
Assist in developing increased appropriate play skills.

- Learn as You Grow Child Care Center
- Parkside Association for Retarded Citizens

Resources

Resources:

The Early Childhood Direction Center (ECDC)
For the ECDC nearest you call 1-800-962-5488

The Child Care Resource and Referral Centers
For the CCR&R nearest you call 518-463-8663

These agencies can tell you where inclusive programs are, link you to local resource people and help you strategize how to include children with special needs in your center.

These are a few child care settings in Onondaga County where inclusion is happening. The people listed have volunteered to answer any questions you may have. All are in area code 315. In addition, all of our Special Needs Programs offer inclusive options and to access them call the CNY ECDC 1-800-962-5488.

Atonement Day Care Center 492-9065
Kathy LaDuca
Inclusive program with SPICE

Cooperative Day Care Center 424-8129
Marilyn Willits or Sharon Coulter
Several models and relationships with BOCES and Jowonio

Learn As You Grow Child Care Center 432-5432
Kathy LaGrow, Director
Inclusive program with Parkside, ARC, BOCES, and Jowonio

St. Vincent DePaul Day Care 476-7508
Pam Patterson
Inclusive model with ENABLE

Books and articles:

Batshaw, M.L., & Perret, Y.M. (1992). *Children with disabilities: A medical primer (3rd edition).* Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.

Child Care Law Center. (1993). *Caring for children with special needs: The Americans with Disabilities Act and child care.* [Available from the Child Care Law Center, 22 Second Street, 5th floor, San Francisco, CA 94105 (415) 495-5498.]

DeHaas-Warner, S. (1994). The role of child care professionals in placement and programming decisions for preschoolers with special needs in community-based settings. *Young Children, 48 (5), 76-78.*

Karp, N., Lyons, W., & Sutherland, B. (Eds.). *Inclusion: A right, not a privilege.* [Available from The Community Inclusion Project, Division of Child and Family Studies, Dept. of Pediatrics, University of Connecticut Health Center, Farm Hollow-Suite A-200, 309 Farmington Ave., Farmington, CT 06032]

Rab, V.Y., & Wood, K.I. (1995). *Child care and the ADA: Handbook for inclusive programs.* Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.

Videos:

Child and Family Services. (1991). *Just a kid like me.* Available from Child and Family Services, 626 North Coronado Terrace, Los Angeles, CA 90026

The New York State Education Department. (1994). *Off to a good start.* Available from NYS Education Department, (518) 474-5807

The North Central Ohio Special Education Center. (1994). *Early childhood education at its best!*